

This I Believe Audio Essay

Purpose

In class, we've been exploring issues surrounding our theme of truth, stories, and lies. As we have discussed this theme and our readings, the concept of "belief" has repeatedly come to the forefront in various guises. In this project, you will get the opportunity to explore and define one of your own core beliefs, write a succinct explanation of that belief and how it operates within your life, and then effectively communicate that belief through your own *spoken* words, as another example of the power of language in action to affect others.

Due Dates

Peer response alphabetic draft: **Wed Apr 9**

Peer response audio draft: **Mon April 14**

Revised version due for grading: **Fri April 18**

Instructions

You will create a 5-minute audio essay (about 2-3 double-spaced pages) that describes your personal beliefs, core values, guiding principles or philosophy, in other words, "the values you live by." Because this is a short essay, you will need to be specific and pick *one* core belief on which to elaborate. Saying what you really want to say in such a short space is not easy. Remember that the essay is called "This I Believe" so you will want to use first person throughout. Do not preach or editorialize about your topic—tell us what you believe in, not what you are against. Speak in your authentic voice with your natural words and rhythms. In class, we will discuss other important audio essay aspects, such as vivid description, conciseness, and clarity.

You will write the essay and receive feedback through peer response. Then, using the freeware application Audacity (you'll learn how in class), you will create a soundtrack of yourself reading the essay with sound effect tracks, such as music, to accompany your voice. Consider carefully your choice of sound effects or music—how will it enhance your message? Also use care when adding other tracks so as not to drown out your own voice. We will practice with Audacity in class.

You will receive feedback on this audio draft through peer response and should revise again for interest, clarity, conciseness, style, and sound quality. You will edit the wording and phrasing considerably for clarity, rhythm, and sound as you record and listen to your essay.

The idea for this assignment is taken from the *This I Believe* radio program, originally created in the 1950s and recently revived by NPR.

For information about "This I Believe" and example essays, go to <http://thisibelieve.org/index.php> or <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4538138>

For writing tips, go to <http://thisibelieve.org/essaywritingtips.html>

Grading Rubric

- **Argument**—the essay has a clear thesis or coordinating theme regarding your belief; the essay is supported with well-chosen examples to illustrate why this belief is important to you.
- **Organization**—the structure flows logically from one idea to the next with clear transitions that connect the various sections of the essay.
- **Cohesion**—the tone of the paper fits the audience and purpose; the background music or sound effects complement the message in such areas as tone, audience addressed, content
- **Style**—the writing is precise and vivid, sentence structure is varied, passive voice is avoided. The writing has a sense of the author's presence (that is, the writing feels like "someone is home").
- **Presentation**—the audio components blend well with no sense of the various elements (voice, music, sound effects) competing with or dominating the others for attention; the speaker's voice is clear and well-paced.